

## Issues Brief Proposal - Environmental Illness

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More and more people are being diagnosed as having multiple hyper-sensitivities, or environmental illness. While debate over cause and cure continues, those with the disease find we have to avoid common substances to prevent debilitating reactions.

Victims have formed a self-help group, the "Human Ecology Foundation of Canada". The group's primary concern is to help members make the lifestyle adjustments needed to avoid the substances each is sensitive to.

Recently the group has become involved in a small amount of lobbying, but concerns are not well articulated and so receive inadequate attention. I feel, if you've read the Maclean's article, you would agree that much more not only should, but must be done. A way to help the group begin the process of identifying needs and priorities would be to write an issues brief, beginning the group animation process during the interviews.

### The brief would:

1. identify concerns expressed by people with sensitivities. Concerns would be ordered under broad categories such as:
  - a) housing - needs, supply, appropriateness, cost
  - b) food & water - needs, availability, cost
  - c) employment & income security - barriers, requirements, problems in trying to get disability pensions,
  - d) education - problems for sensitive kids, the school environment
  - e) health care costs - special needs, lack of clinics or benefits, dangers in the hospital environment
  - f) transportation - barriers, needs
  - g) environmental concerns - (spraying parks, smoking, etc.)
  - h) social functioning - barriers, special difficulties
  - i) mobilization - impediments to organizing for change
  - j) community resource development - what's needed?
  - k) media coverage - ignorance, trivialization, finally realization
2. In each category, each issue synopsis would include:
  - a) why the concern exists, what is at stake
  - b) its dimensions as described by sufferers, critical examples
  - c) anecdotal information designed to personalize points, keep the information human.
  - d) list of parties relevant to the issue such as government departments, different levels of government, other organizations.
  - e) position of relevant parties on specific issues, where position has been indicated.
  - f) information about how other disadvantaged groups have dealt with similar issues, their comments and suggestions.

The brief would take about one year to complete, in ten stages.

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| 1. consultation with resource personnel  | 1 mo     |
| 1. Survey, interviews  | 2 mo     |
| 3. Tabulation of concerns into précis, anecdotes                               | 3 mo(**) |
| 4. circulation for feedback (participants and consultants)                     | 1 mo     |
| 5. positions of relevant parties research                                      | 2 mo     |
| 6. write up of positions to append to each précis                              | 2 mo(**) |
| 7. circulation for feedback (consultants, participants)                        | 1 mo     |
| 8. incorporation of feedback, introduction, conclusion                         | 1 mo     |
| 9. duplication and distribution. (participants, relevant parties, consultants) | 1 mo     |
| 10. Assessment by feedback.  | 1 mo(**) |

\*\* One month overlap with previous stage.

Spinoffs: (not part of this, but put within reach if this proposal is accepted)

A magazine-format publication would be distributed using articles, games, and other techniques to popularize the content of the issues brief. The once only magazine would be very digestable, designed for the general public, social agencies, and governments.

A film documenting these issues could tell the story of four or five people faced with perhaps unnecessary barricades as a result of what is actually a manageable problem.

What the issues brief will not be

I would stick to my area of expertise, that is researching and describing issues affecting people. I would not presume to record or defend medical positions, except to offer a brief description of the illness as defined by a physician, probably by the group's medical advisor. I would also avoid prescribing solutions to the problems described. Solutions will best be born out of discussion among interested parties, not from my single perspective. Where parallels are remarkable, consultants with experience in sorting out similar issues with other groups may be asked for advice.

I'm asking for your help in funding all, or at least a substantial part of this project. The budget totals \$25,000.00, including \$15,000.00 as a half-time salary, and \$10,000.00 to cover expenses, including part-time employment for others with the illness. The project would be done under the auspices of the Human Ecology Foundation of Canada, a registered charity. My experience is in community animation and journalism. My resume is attached. I know you will make your decision on the merits of the project, but I might mention I'm not all that bad at getting media attention, positive attention about an important step forward for our members.

Thank you for your consideration. I'd be glad, of course, to provide any further information. Sandra Stronge is only one of many. The need really is urgent.

Thank you for reading this.



Chris Brown